



Healthy Neighborhoods

Peoria, like other national cities, recognizes the importance of planning for the health of residents through community design. Designing a community that offers opportunities for a healthy lifestyle can include outdoor activities and spaces that are useable by various age groups, access to nutritious foods, opportunities for exercise, and community events that foster interactions between residents. Research has also shown that improved land use patterns and neighborhood design also have the potential to improve the overall health and quality of residents by incorporating uses and design features that encourage people to live active and healthy lifestyles.

Peoria strives to provide a quality physical and social environment for its residents and provides programs and services for the preservation and enhancement of neighborhoods. Peoria citizens stress the importance of neighborhoods and their desire to maintain quality standards that make Peoria's neighborhoods safe, vibrant, and connected. The goals and policies of this element recognize that the health of neighborhoods is directly linked to improving and enhancing resident health and quality of life.

PURPOSE

To protect and enhance the health, safety, and general welfare of Peoria’s citizens, workers, and visitors by integrating health-promoting design and development practices at the building or project scale. Elevating the vitality of the people by promoting health and wellness in the built environment enhances both property and community values.

5.1 COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Conventional wisdom would suggest that medical care and individual choices determine our level of health. However, the reality is that the *built environment*, where we live and work, also has a strong influence on our health and longevity. Understanding the link between the built environment and health has become a new area of focus for many communities confronting troubling health trends with the rise of chronic diseases, because those health problems in turn impact the economy and the future of the community.

One such economic impact is diminished productivity and reduced workforce availability due to time away from school and work because of the effects of chronic diseases. Some of the potential negative effects of behaviors and lifestyle choices are preventable with small changes to everyday routines by incorporating exercise and proper nutrition. However, people who live in communities that have increased opportunities for physical activity in daily life are generally more active, which in turn helps significantly reduce their risk and health concerns from leading chronic diseases. Additionally, as the link between the design of a community to one’s health continues to be well documented, businesses are now seeking out health-promoting places. More specifically, neighborhoods that offer a good “quality of life” for their residents attract investment and economic development. In turn, economic development can provide job opportunities that give the financial resources that can lead to better health. Thus, healthy communities are more economically vibrant communities.

To secure a bright future for our residents, the City of Peoria must lead the way to good health and community wellness. Through a new focus on public health from the perspective of the built environment and city services, Peoria will strive to achieve better health for its residents through its programs, policies, plans, budgeting, and community engagement.

Healthy Community Design

Healthy Community Design, as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency, is about planning and designing communities to enable and encourage small changes resulting in happier, healthier lifestyles. While healthy community design strategies can often be found in some state-mandated topics, typically general plans only address certain concerns relating primarily to the built environment. The City of Peoria seeks to go beyond what is typical, and elevate the vitality of its citizens, and thus its economic future by including a comprehensive element dedicated to health and wellness within this General Plan. The City believes that by including community wellness from a holistic perspective within the General Plan, it ensures that public health and wellness remain a top City priority.



Key aspects of healthy living environments include access to:

- Economic opportunities;
- High-quality and range of housing options;
- Healthy foods;
- Medical services;
- Parks and recreational facilities;
- Walking, bicycling and public transit;
- Walkable neighborhoods with access to services;
- Safe neighborhoods and public spaces;
- Environmental quality; and
- Sustainable development

By developing specific policies and implementing actions that relate to both physical and socioeconomic conditions, the City can work toward reducing critical health risks in the community and improving the health of all Peoria residents.

Health in All Themes

Due to the broad and wide-ranging nature of the topic of community health, Healthy Neighborhoods (HN) is not the only chapter that contains narrative, goals and policies related to health and quality of life. In this instance, the Healthy Neighborhoods chapter enhances the health and well-being of all Peoria residents by focusing on promoting active living, improved access to healthy food and medical services, housing and community stability, community engagement, and environmental sustainability.

5.2 INCREASING ACCESS TO HEALTH

Healthy Foods

A community's health is shaped by many factors related to food, including access to healthy food and sustainable food systems. Likewise, diet and exercise are one of the most effective means to preventing and treating significant chronic diseases. Thus, how our community promotes healthy eating, a range of healthy food choices, and physical activities is important in managing health care costs for Peoria and its residents. Additionally, consuming locally produced foods can reduce the need for long-distance transportation, which can reduce environmental impacts, and it supports the livelihoods of local producers and local businesses.





While there are several factors that determine what people choose to eat, access to food is a critical factor because people will buy what is readily available. Currently, in some areas of the community residents have more convenient access to fast food compared to a produce or grocery store. Without convenient access to healthy food, this results in a missed opportunity to improved nutrition, along with a loss of revenue for local food stores. While food is a personal choice, the City of Peoria recognizes the benefit in creating an environment in which all residents have access to affordable and healthy food.

The City of Peoria is promoting policies that elevate the health of the community by providing ample access to an affordable and abundant selection of fresh and healthy food throughout the city. Through implementation of these policies, the goal is to support a variety of healthy food outlets such as grocery stores, farmer's markets and community gardens within convenient distance to neighborhoods. Because a healthy diet means more than food, the City is also promoting enhanced access to drinking water in public facilities, businesses, and schools as another means to promote lifelong health of its residents.

Medical Services

Research has shown that people with healthy lifestyles and living in a healthy community typically need less medical care, have better long-term health outcomes, and suffer less chronic disease. However, personal health does not begin or end by visiting a doctor's office just one time. A healthy lifestyle is achieved by regularly receiving routine health and preventive care and having access to a comprehensive range of medical services as needed. This not only includes primary care, but a range of other medical and health-related services including specialty care, dental care, mental health services, home health care, emergency services, long-term care, and alternative care.



Using primary care as an example, having access to affordable and convenient primary care plays a prominent role in preserving good health and preventing hospitalizations from chronic and communicable diseases. Conversely, if there is a lack of access to affordable medical facilities and services in a timely manner, residents may forgo receiving care, which can exacerbate chronic health conditions such as diabetes or asthma. In these situations, the city's decision regarding land use and the transportation system can directly impact access and availability to any or all medical services. For example, if the city encourages health facilities to be located near public transit, ease of access is enhanced for those who do not drive or own cars, and thus the overall community health is improved.



The City of Peoria recognizes the importance of convenient access to a full range of health care facilities and medical services. Collectively, the goals and policies within this chapter and throughout the General Plan has been developed to promote the expansion of health care facilities and services in convenient locations to meet the health needs of all residents.

5.3 ACTIVE LIVING

“Active living” is a way of life that integrates physical activity into everyday routines, and there are many dimensions to active living that can be affected by the built environment. Evidence has shown that people who live in places with good pedestrian amenities, bicycle infrastructure, and access to trails have higher rates of physical activity and lower body weights. Additionally, park and playground access are also critical, since studies show that people who live within half a mile of a park tend to exercise more than people who lack park access.

The City of Peoria recognizes that offering improved access to parks and recreational facilities, recreation programming, and transit corridors provides both residents and visitors with an abundant number of opportunities to participate in physical activity. These four areas are an essential part of building a healthy, quality, and vibrant community. These aspects are briefly described herein, and also addressed within the Integrated Transportation chapter and the Art, Cultural, and Recreational Enrichment chapter as well.

Parks and Recreational Facilities

Whether for passive or active use, parks and recreation facilities are an important part of everyday, active living, providing critical health benefits for all ages. Peoria already has a great recreation and open space system that fosters a more livable and enjoyable community; however, the City is projected to continue to grow and mature by 2040. Because physical activity and active living is critical to health, the City is committed to continually looking to improve access within existing parks and open space, as well as prioritizing new parks and open space as one of its top priorities.

Recreational Programming

The City of Peoria already offers a wide range of recreational programs and services to the community that forms an important component of community identity. Not only is the recreational system important to health and fitness, but it also provides a variety of activity choices to residents and visitors of Peoria. However, the city is not the only provider of recreation programs and services. Acting on the goals and policies set forth in this General Plan, the City should regularly explore developing and updating programs, services, and facilities in order to provide the widest range of recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities.

Over time, the City's recreational programming has and will continue to evolve, as some programs are better suited to be provided by other organizations within the community. From a fiscally sustainable practice, it is important to strategically partner with some of these organizations to continue to provide those additive high-quality programs and services to the community as appropriate. In doing so, it would allow the city to maintain and improve upon core and desirable programs.





Walking, Bicycling and Public Transit

Healthy communities are designed to encourage walking, biking and use of public transit. Selection of land use, street design, site planning, availability of safe routes, and proximity to public transit can impact pedestrian use and outdoor activity. For example, walking or bicycling to school or work for daily errands and for recreation increases overall physical activity and contributes to physical health. Using public transportation also helps individuals meet minimum daily requirements for physical activity and curbs air pollution. Additionally, alternative modes of transportation contribute to a reduction in vehicle miles traveled, overall vehicle emissions and noise. Where homes, businesses and community destinations are conveniently located near transit, studies indicate that over a span of time, people will rely less on single car trips.



Walkable Neighborhoods

Walkable neighborhoods give residents, visitors and employees greater opportunities to connect while they work, shop and dine, and overall enhances their sense of community. It also creates a safer and more mobile community. Part of making a walking neighborhood viable and enjoyable is the creation of a comprehensive bike and path trail system, which along with sidewalks and connected streets are an integral part of any transit system. It also enables safer and easier travel by residents with limited mobility, and makes walking or biking to and from school safer and easier for children. Accordingly, the city will continue to integrate pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements and amenities into new and reconstructed streets, along with ensuring new developments incorporate the City's planned shared-use path system.



5.4 SOCIALLY CONNECTED

A “socially connected” community is a place where everyone feels like they belong. It is a place where people know their neighbors and feel motivated to get involved. Bringing people together in social settings not only can improve mental and physical health of individuals, but benefits extend to the community as well. These benefits can include increased neighborhood safety, resilience during emergency events, increased volunteering, and a stronger sense of community pride. Accordingly, social connectedness is an important factor in creating happy, healthy and safe places to live.

Positive social interactions can be facilitated by the built environment. For example, well-designed gathering spaces within neighborhoods or commercial centers, and recreational facilities and parks are all powerful tools to bring people together. Additionally, programs and events are good strategies for strengthening community identity, increasing social interaction, and supporting a variety of goals related to health and well-being. Even still, going beyond satisfying our basic human need for social networks and relationships, participation in civic life is also an essential need and is a critical component of healthy communities.

Civic engagement through volunteerism allows residents to take an active role in addressing local challenges. Citizens involved in local decision-making are more likely to understand and better appreciate the needs of all members of the community. Civic engagement includes volunteering in the community, and participating on committees, boards, or commissions. Without our numerous and dedicated volunteers, Peoria would not be able to continue to provide the exceptional level of service that it does today into our future. Hence, the goals and policies within this chapter and others within the General Plan foster an increased social connectedness in Peoria.





“A home has a unique place in our everyday lives. Homes are where we start and end our day, where are children live and play, where friends and family gather to celebrate, and where we seek refuge and safety.”

Housing and Urban Development’s Advancing Healthy Housing A Strategy for Action

5.5 HEALTHY HOUSING

Housing can have a significant and sustained impact not only on a person’s health, but the community’s health as well. Evidence shows that individuals and families increasingly value health when making housing decisions. That is why an all-inclusive approach to health across the housing marketplace spectrum is paramount to creating a thriving community. In this section, the primary factors that influence healthy housing are explored, along with their impact to the community’s overall health and desirableness.

Housing Affordability

Housing affordability is determined by how much of a person or family’s income is used for housing costs. Homeowners and renters are considered “cost burdened” if they spend more than 30% of their income on housing. The impact of higher housing costs reduces disposable income, leaving less available for preventive medical treatment, food, and other necessities. Higher costs may also require residents to maintain multiple jobs, live in unsafe conditions, and pay higher transportation costs. Housing affordability not only influences the overall community health, it also can significantly impact the city’s economic vitality.

Workforce housing is one of the many factors considered when a business looks to remain, expand or relocate to another location. As Peoria continues to grow, having a diverse range of housing options to meet lifestyle needs is an essential element in attracting and maintaining our existing and future workforce. The City of Peoria recognizes the impact that housing affordability has on the city’s health and prosperity, and seeks to expand housing options throughout the community to offer lifestyle housing options for all residents.

Aging in Place

The City of Peoria primarily follows larger national trends in that the overall age of the community continues to increase. Accordingly, Peoria’s senior population is expected to continue to grow in the coming years as the current population ages. Rather than move, many residents prefer to stay in their homes and their community. “Aging in place” is the ability for residents to live safely, independently, and comfortably in their community as they age and preserves self-esteem and valuable social networks that support a higher level of life for seniors.

Development of a range of affordable housing types, including multi-generational housing, independent living, and assisted living throughout the community are needed for Peoria seniors. Additionally, housing should be located conveniently to transit, and near entertainment and recreational amenities. Supportive services are also essential, such as senior focused programs that provide opportunities for volunteer and paid work, and encourage elderly residents to fully engage in their community.

Fair Housing Practices

The need to protect against housing discrimination and provide equal housing opportunities has been formalized by state and federal fair housing laws. Additionally, fair housing benefits everyone by expanding access to opportunity. Accordingly, the policies and programs implemented by the City will promote fair housing practices and accessibility among residents, community stakeholders and those involved in the production, preservation and operation of housing.

Housing Quality

With Americans spending more time in their residences, the condition of their home is a factor in their health and quality of life. Typical poor housing conditions include, but are not limited to items such as: roofing problems; heating, plumbing, and electrical deficiencies; water leaks; damaged paint and so on. These unsafe conditions can have a physical toll on the residents, while also imposing a considerable economic burden to them. These conditions are often associated with a wide range of health conditions, including injuries, respiratory illness, asthma, lead poisoning, and cancer as an example. For many of these problems, straightforward fixes may be available. A number of factors can cause homes to become unsafe or unhealthy to live in. Preventing these problems from occurring and addressing them when they do occur protects the safety and welfare of residents and assists in meeting housing needs throughout Peoria.

5.6 COMMUNITY DESIGN AND STABILITY

Ensuring quality within new neighborhoods and preserving older neighborhoods offers many important advantages to the city, including resiliency and community stability. The continuity of existing and new neighborhoods also provides a sense of permanence and well-being, as well as enhances our understanding of community identity, history, and future possibilities. This section of the General Plan addresses the desire for quality of development in new neighborhoods, and provides the foundation to preserving our character and community within existing neighborhoods.

Complete Neighborhoods

The term “complete neighborhood” refers to a neighborhood where residents have safe and convenient access to the goods and services needed in daily life. An important aspect of a complete neighborhood are design elements that incorporate human scale principles, which meet the needs of people of all ages and abilities. Providing complete neighborhoods also provides a setting for residents to develop a strong sense of belonging, which is promoted by their interactions with one another.



The form and quality of development in new neighborhoods can enhance the image and identity of Peoria as well as for each of its unique neighborhood areas. As new neighborhoods are developed, it is important that the City safeguard the existing overall identity and character of the community by ensuring high quality design standards and zoning regulations for both commercial and residential development. This includes high quality construction standards at initial development and inclusion of quality neighborhood design features, including a focal point, such as a park or school, a variety of dwelling types, equal importance of vehicular and pedestrian circulation, an effective street layout with easy access to daily conveniences, appealing streetscapes, and respect for historic sites and structures. Accordingly, the City of Peoria will continually refine its enhanced development and design standards and other programs to preserve and enhance the neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Preservation

Neighborhood preservation efforts help protect the health, safety and wellbeing of Peoria residents from deteriorating neighborhoods. The goals and policies in this chapter and throughout the General Plan build on the strength of Peoria's neighborhoods by providing appropriate measures to help neighborhoods remain strong. This approach is designed to help expand neighborhood confidence, increase community pride, protect housing values and strengthen civic involvement. For example, conserving and improving the housing stock helps maintains investment in the community and keeps existing housing affordable. Additionally, rehabilitating an older building can cost less and take less time to complete than constructing a new building of the same size for the same use. Rehabilitation also uses less energy and a smaller amount of building materials. Furthermore, older buildings often have spaces that are especially suited to small companies and start-ups.



The City recognizes the health and economic benefits of ensuring the long-term success of its neighborhoods, and will take the following steps to assist in preserving them in a well-maintained state:

- Ensure housing be maintained in a decent, safe, healthy and clean condition.
- Encourage home improvements and exterior upgrades through educational means.
- Encourage neighborhood pride and neighborliness through involvement of residents and volunteers in neighborhood promotion and pride projects.
- Promote collaboration between the City, neighborhood groups, and other interested parties.
- Maintain and enhance programs, policies and strategies that will ensure that Peoria’s neighborhoods continue to be a safe and pleasant place to live.

5.7 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Cities who are focused on improving the health of their community promote sustainable development, wise use of their resources, and environmental stewardship of the land. Sustainable development can be generally defined as an approach to land development that meets the needs of the current population without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In this manner, sustainable development practices both focus on increasing the efficiency with which buildings use resources, while simultaneously reducing impacts on human health and the environment through better siting, design, construction, operation and maintenance.

The City has already made great strides to incorporate sustainable development practices within the construction and remodeling of its own buildings, and its operations and maintenance practices. As the City looks to guide future growth and redevelopment through a health lens, it seeks to promote these same sustainable principles and development practices on a larger scale throughout the community through the selected goals and policies within this chapter and throughout this General Plan.





5.8 GOALS AND POLICIES

GOALS

1. **Health and Well Being:** The City is committed to improving the quality of life of its residents and increasing their opportunities to make healthy lifestyle choices.
2. **Active Lifestyle Choices:** Creation and expansion of convenient and safe opportunities to incorporate physical activity into everyday activities of residents, employees, and visitors.
3. **Access to Healthy Foods:** Strive to ensure all residents have convenient access to healthy foods by supporting a variety of healthy food outlets within neighborhoods and communities.
4. **Access to Medical Services:** Promote access and maintenance of a full range of health care and medical services for all residents.
5. **Socially-Connected Neighborhoods:** Facilitate social interaction and foster a sense of security and community pride by assuring safety in neighborhoods and public spaces.
6. **Civic Engagement:** Promote civic engagement and volunteerism to allow residents to take an active role in addressing local challenges, which are important facets of a healthy community.
7. **Variety of Housing:** A diversity of housing types and prices that are high quality, built in a sustainable manner, and meet the varied housing needs of residents for all stages of life.
8. **Supportive Services:** Encourage and promote public and private sector education, training and wellness programs designed to improve health and wellness for all residents.
9. **Environmental Health:** Natural open space is preserved and activated in a manner that maintains the pristine environment while allowing for enjoyment of and interaction with nature.
10. **Parks, Open Space and Recreation:** Create and support a diverse recreational system, connecting trails, parks, and recreational facilities that are suited to the varied needs of residents and visitors.
11. **Recreation Programs:** Create development opportunities for, and support, both public and private multi-generational recreation programs suited to the broad needs and interests of all residents.
12. **Sustainability in Decision-Making:** Incorporation of sound, efficient, ecological policies and practices in decision-making processes and operational procedures.

POLICIES

Community Wellness

- CW-1** Foster educational opportunities that show a connection between “place” and health and promote an understanding of the connections between the built environment and health challenges in the City of Peoria.
- CW-2** Support partnerships with local health service providers, the public health agencies, schools, and other community-based organizations to promote health, wellness, and preventative care.
- CW-3** Offer education programs and services, which target the wellness of residents and families physically, mentally and financially.
- CW-4** Expand access to healthy food and nutrition choices by promoting expanded access to grocery stores, community gardens, urban agriculture and local markets.
- CW-5** Support and promote availability and accessibility of clean drinking water and water filling station in public facilities, businesses, and schools.
- CW-6** Promote improved access to comprehensive range of health care facilities and medical services for all residents, including hospitals, acute care facilities, neighborhood health portals/clinics, and mental health facilities.
- CW-7** Promote improved transit connections to service and healthcare providers for people who are transit-dependent.
- CW-8** Advocate for more complete, healthy communities that provide access to a range of daily goods and services, and recreational resources within comfortable walking distance of homes.
- CW-9** Support cohesive, well-designed and well-maintained neighborhoods that offer a variety of lifecycle housing options for all residents.
- CW-10** Facilitate social interaction and foster a sense of identity and community pride by providing attractive, safe walkways, and linked community gathering spaces.
- CW-11** Continue to improve access and expand recreation opportunities and facilities for maximum accessibility, allowing people of all ages and abilities to participate.
- CW-12** Ensure recreational opportunities are offered within comfortable walking distance of homes, schools, and businesses in order to encourage more physically and socially active lifestyles.
- CW-13** Support and promote development and redevelopment that reduces automobile dependency through more efficient and varied use of lands.
- CW-14** Support access to efficient and safe public transit and other active circulation options that increase physical activity, reduce air and noise pollution, and make streets safe for people of all ages.
- CW-15** Coordinate with regional transportation agencies and support enhanced and expanded public transit to improve mobility options for residents, employees, and visitors.



Neighborhood Preservation

- NP-1** Protect existing residential areas from incompatible land uses and activities through careful consideration of zoning amendments and enforcement of buffering requirements.
- NP-2** Promote the conservation and rehabilitation of existing residential areas and improve neighborhood appearance by requiring compliance with property maintenance codes.
- NP-3** Public and private infrastructure and amenities are designed, constructed, and maintained to maximize safety and security and reduce opportunities for criminal activity.
- NP-4** Increase safety and security in public places, such as parks, recreation facilities, sidewalks, transit stops and facilities, and trails by providing adequate lighting, maintaining landscaping to maximize visibility and reduce hiding places, removing graffiti and blight conditions from public areas; and conducting regular police and volunteer (crime watch) patrols.
- NP-5** Utilize existing or develop new programs which identify aging neighborhoods and prioritize efforts to revitalize housing and infrastructure.
- NP-6** Encourage landowners to maintain and upgrade their property in neighborhoods, commercial corridors and employment areas to protect viable neighborhoods and businesses.
- NP-7** Undertake a detailed housing needs assessment to define areas of need and an implementation plan to expand housing options.
- NP-8** Promote and provide incentives, such as reduced fees, expedited plan reviews, or increased allowable densities, to encourage the development of diverse workforce housing.
- NP-9** Encourage non-traditional housing types to expand housing options, such as habitable accessory dwelling units, along with adapted reuse of residential, commercial, and industrial structures.
- NP-10** Support the development of multigenerational housing or continuum of care facilities and special needs housing options within all neighborhoods.
- NP-11** Master Planned Communities shall include a range of housing densities and types that provide life-cycle housing opportunities in order to attract all ages of residents with a range of income levels and needs.

Open Space Conservation

- OS-1** Ensures connectivity and recreational opportunities for the public that are maintained by the adjacent development.
- OS-2** Curate access to natural features within developments containing hillside or wash elements for all residents.
- OS-3** Protect and preserve view sheds within open space areas wherever possible to enhance the resident and visitor's experience and provide a further visual connection with nature.
- OS-4** Coordinate the preservation and conservation of cultural resource areas with the State Historic and Preservation Office (SHPO), and current and future private development projects.

- OS-5** Develop management agreements with public and private entities to ensure appropriate use and preservation of cultural and historic resources for future generations.
- OS-6** Enhance community awareness and increase public support of local cultural opportunities through appropriate park and recreational programs and activities.
- OS-7** Create, preserve, and manage biologically rich, connected open space; wildlife and plant habitat; and wildlife corridors, including natural washes and pockets of native vegetation, while working to eradicate invasive species.
- OS-8** Rehabilitate and enhance natural drainage systems, water detention and retention basins, and other infiltration areas for multiple benefits, such as recreation, wildlife habitat, and stormwater management.

Environmental Sustainability

- ES-1** Work towards reducing the overall energy footprint from residential, employment, transportation and City operations.
- ES-2** Incorporate and expand sustainability into the City's communication and outreach efforts.
- ES-3** Support regional policies and efforts that improve air quality to protect human and environmental health
- ES-4** Reduce the urban heat island effect by minimizing heat generation and retention from the built environment using a range of strategies.
- ES-5** Expand and maintain a healthy, drought-tolerant, low-water use tree canopy and urban forest to improve the attractiveness of neighborhoods and the city as a whole.
- ES-6** Promote efficient use of energy and conservation of available resources in the design, construction, maintenance and operation of public and private facilities, infrastructure and equipment.
- ES-7** Create a landscaping maintenance guide identifying proper planting, care, and maintenance to protect, restore, enhance, and manage trees for their long-term health.
- ES-8** Increase energy efficiency in new and existing water, wastewater and reclaimed water systems.
- ES-9** Reduce and/or mitigate noise pollution for occupants by incorporating advanced technology and building materials that will help mitigate transportation related noise impacted on residential and sensitive uses within the community.
- ES-10** Protect the night skies from light pollution through building codes and design standards.



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